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SOME HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE TEXAS LIBRARY AND HISTORICAL COMMISSION

E. W. WINKLER

I. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BILL CREATING THE COMMISSION

The Texas State Historical Association was organized March 2, 1897. During the session of the legislature in 1899 a bill was introduced having for its object the creation of a Texas Historical Commission. The Commission was to consist of the Commissioner of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics and History, who was *ex officio* State Librarian at that time, and of two other persons, members of the Texas State Historical Association, to be appointed by the Governor. The name, personnel and functions of this proposed Commission indicate clearly where it originated. The bill passed the senate, but died on the calendar in the house because it was not looked after by those who had it in hand.

The State Federation of Women's Literary Clubs was organized May 13, 1897. This new organization inaugurated an enthusiastic campaign for libraries. A glance at the date of opening in a list of Texas public libraries illustrates this fact. The president of the Federation in her annual address in April, 1899, in reviewing the year's work, said, "The leading interest of our federation year has been the work for libraries." The special library committee gave an excellent account of its work, and concluded its report with the statement that it hoped that the movement so auspiciously begun would "grow and spread until our grand state shall be so permeated as to compel favorable legislation, and Texas shall lead the other states in the liberality of her library laws."

The increase in the number of libraries in this State led to the organization of the Texas Library Association on June 9, 1902. The number of library workers was still too small to maintain an organization, so it drew generously for its support and membership upon the women's clubs. In turn it provided the library movement begun and carried on by the clubs with a number of trained leaders and indefatigable workers.

A bill to create a State Library Commission was introduced in

the legislature in 1903. The proposed commission was to consist of five members appointed by the Governor. The Commission had charge of library extension only; there was to be no connection between it and the State Library. The bill failed to pass. Two years later the same bill was again introduced. However, it had been changed so as to extend the Commission's control over the State Library. This bill also failed to pass. In 1907, a bill much more carefully drawn but along the lines of that of 1905, was introduced. To the provisions of this bill was added the legislative reference section, and to the five appointive members were added two *ex officio* members—the superintendent of public instruction and the president of the University of Texas. Owing to peculiar conditions in the legislature, this bill failed to pass. The bill introduced in 1909 resembled that of 1907 in all its provisions, but changed the title to Texas Library and Historical Commission, reduced the appointive members to three, and substituted the professor of history in the University of Texas for the president of that institution. This readjustment in the name and membership of the commission was in thorough accord with the provisions already embodied in the bill, and in the opinion of some helped the passage of the measure in no small degree. The law went into effect March 19, 1909.

II. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

The duties of the Texas Library and Historical Commission may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. To control and administer the State Library and to maintain therein a legislative reference section "for the use and information of the members of the legislature, the heads of the several state departments, and such other citizens as may desire to consult the same."

2. To conduct library extension work. "The commission shall give advice to such persons as contemplate the establishment of public libraries in regard to such matters as the maintenance of public libraries, selection of books, cataloguing and library management. The commission shall have conducted library institutes, and encourage library associations."

3. To perform the functions of a department of archives and

history. The commission is directed by law "to collect materials relating to the history of Texas and the adjoining states, to preserve, classify and publish the manuscript archives and such other matters as it may deem proper, to diffuse knowledge in regard to the history of Texas, to encourage historical work and research, [and] to mark historic sites and houses and secure their preservation."

As it is with the duties of the commission enumerated under the last sub-division that this paper concerns itself, it may not be out of place to go somewhat into the details of the provisions of the law relating thereto. The various materials which the commission is authorized to collect may be acquired by purchase, gift, exchange, transfer, or on deposit. Acting under the direction of the commission the state librarian shall

collect [1] all manuscript records relating to the history of Texas now in the hands of private individuals . . . [He] shall endeavor to procure from Mexico the original archives which have been removed from Texas and relate to the history and settlement thereof, and in case he can not procure the originals, he shall endeavor to procure authentic copies thereof. In like manner he shall procure the originals or authentic copies of manuscripts preserved in other archives beyond the limits of the State, in so far as said manuscripts relate to the history of Texas. [2] He shall seek diligently to procure a copy of every book, pamphlet, map or other printed matter giving valuable information concerning this State. [3] He shall endeavor to complete the files of the early Texas newspapers now in the State Library, and he shall cause to be bound the current files of not less than ten of the leading newspapers of the State, and the current files of not less than four leading newspapers of other States, and as many of the county papers, professional journals, denominational papers, agricultural papers, trade journals and other publications of this State as seem necessary to preserve in the State Library an accurate record of the history of Texas. [4] He shall collect portraits or photographs of as many prominent men of Texas as possible. [5] He shall constantly endeavor to build up an historical museum worthy of the interesting and important history of this State. [Last but not least, 6] He shall demand and receive from the officers of State departments having them in charge, all books, maps, papers, manuscripts, documents, memoranda and data not connected with or necessary to the current duties of said officers, relating to the history of Texas, and carefully classify, catalogue and preserve the same.

III. REVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

The broad and liberal terms of the law as set forth above have perhaps excited the curiosity and raised high the expectations of the reader in regard to what has been accomplished. It is better, therefore, to remind him at the outset that it is one thing to have prepared drawings and specifications for a beautiful structure, and quite another matter to obtain the money with which to erect the same. The law outlines the work to be done by the commission. The biennial appropriation indicates the resources available for doing this work. Reference to the last appropriation bill will show that of necessity only a small portion of the commission's task could be performed during the past two years.

1. *Books*.—While it might prove interesting to this audience to mention some of the books and pamphlets relating to the history of Texas that have been acquired since March 19, 1909, time and space forbid. A few of the larger works, bearing more or less directly on the field of Southwestern history, can be touched upon.

a. *Publications* of the Hakluyt Society, 1848-1906, First Series, 100 volumes, Second Series, volumes 1-18. These series embrace the voyages and travels of the great age of discovery which inaugurated the period of modern history. Columbus, Cortes, De Soto, and Cabeza de Vaca are some of those whose writings are included.

b. *Biblioteca Hispano-Americana, 1493-1810*. Por José Terribio Medina. Santiago de Chile, 1898-1907. 7 vols. In this comprehensive bibliography of Spanish America the works are listed in the chronological order of their publication, and in alphabetical order when there are several publications for the same year. Each publication is described; the location of some of them in public libraries is indicated; reference is made to other bibliographies in which they are included; and an account of the authors is supplied in some instances. Each volume has an index to the names of authors, but there is no general index to the set. The titles listed are distributed as follows:

Number of volume.	Date of publication.	Titles listed.	Years covered by these titles.
I	1898	1-449	1493-1600
II	1900	450-1153	1601-1650
III	1900	1153-2023	1651-1700
IV	1901	2024-4284	1701-1767
V	1902	4285-6151	1768-1810
VI	1902	6152-7737	16..-1806
VII	1907	7738-8481	1567-1738

It will be observed that volumes six and seven are supplementary to the first five volumes.

c. *The South in the Building of the Nation*. Richmond, 1909-1910. 10 volumes. The subtitle of this work is "A history of the Southern States designed to record the South's part in the making of the American nation; to portray the character and genius, to chronicle the achievements and progress and to illustrate the life and traditions of the Southern people." The brevity and large number of subjects treated give the work very much the character of a cyclopedia. The longer articles on Texas are the following:¹

Texas as a part of Mexico. By C. W. Hutson.

Texas as a Republic. By E. C. Barker.

Texas in the Federal Union. By S. P. Brooks.

Texas in the Confederacy. By C. W. Ramsdell.

Texas in the New Nation. By C. W. Ramsdell.

The State Finances of Texas. By E. T. Miller.

d. *Library of Southern Literature*. Atlanta, 1909. 15 vols. This work sets itself the task "to represent comprehensively and in adequate amount the literary life of the Southern people of the United States." The following Texans have been given space in this work:²

Amelia E. Barr. By Mrs. Clara Driscoll Sevier.

William A. Chittenden. By John A. Lomax.

¹In the biographical section of this work (Volume x, page 338) Judge John H. Reagan's name is incorrectly given as "Joseph" H. Reagan.

²Among the inscriptions printed in Volume 14 are those of the Alamo Monument. Unfortunately, the best known of these inscriptions is incorrectly quoted: "Thermopylae had her messenger of *death* but the Alamo had none." The italicised word should be defeat. To make the error the more glaring, reference is made to Volume VI of THE QUARTERLY, where the inscription is correctly given.

- David Crockett. By James M. Grainger.
Robert Louis Dabney. By J. Gray McAllister.
Mary Evelyn Moore Davis. By William B. Smith.¹
Lafayette Rupert Hamberlin. By P. H. Eager.
Sam Houston. By George P. Garrison.
Mirabeau B. Lamar. By A. W. Terrell.
Clarence Ousley. By Rev. William M. Harris.
J. P. Sjolander. By Hilton R. Greer.
Stark Young. By R. A. Law.

2. *Newspapers*.—The commission has had the pleasure of adding a number of files, or portions of files, of early Texas newspapers to those already in the State Library.

a. *Telegraph and Texas Register*. A bound file of this paper from June 12, 1837, to August 4, 1838, was presented by Mrs. Wells Thompson. The volume is not in as perfect condition as could be wished; as Mrs. Thompson expressed it, "the book has gone through all the storms, hurricanes and cyclones of the Matagorda coast."

b. *Texas State Gazette*. A partial file of this paper for the period from September 17, 1855, to March 22, 1862, was among the articles included in Mrs. Thompson's valuable gift. This paper was published at Austin.

c. *New Orleans Weekly Delta*. Included in Mrs. Thompson's gift there was an almost complete file of this important New Orleans paper for the period from October 18, 1847, to February 1, 1862.

d. *De Bow's Review*. There was among the materials presented by Mrs. Thompson a fairly complete, unbound file of this important journal, beginning with January, 1846, and extending to 1870. "This review was to commerce, manufactures, agriculture, internal improvements, and industrial activity in any line, what the *Southern Literary Messenger* was to literature, while in history they met on common ground. Its field was the south, west and southwest; it undertook to defend their rights, develop their

¹In the biographical sketch of Mrs. Davis is found this sentence: "In 1870, at the age of eighteen, she published at Houston her first volume, 'Minding the Gap, and other poems,' which attained much popularity and passed through several editions." Copies of this volume "Minding the Gap," etc., in the State Library show that it was first published in 1867.

resources, collect and preserve their statistics, and during much of its existence, made these subjects superior to the questions of national politics."¹ No effort will be made to refer to all the articles on Texas in this review, but it may be well to direct attention to some of the more important, which have been noted in this incomplete file:

St. Denis's expedition to Mexico. II, 215-224.

Early times in Texas. X, 166-175, 413-423.

Life and times of Lafitte. XI, 372-387; XII, 111-113, 222; XIII, 101-2, 204-5, 422.

Bowie family. XIII, 378-383.

Memucan Hunt. XIII, 416-419, with portrait.

Captain John McHenry. By John Henry Brown. XIV, 46-48.

Captain Henry S. Brown. By John Henry Brown. XV, 572-583.

Thomas J. Rusk. XXIII, 432-437.

Stephen F. Austin. By James H. Bell. XXIV, 114-136.

William S. Oldham. By E. Fontain. XXXVIII, 873-880.

e. *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung*. A file of this paper, covering the period from November 25, 1853, to September 20, 1872, was one of the important additions to the early Texas newspapers published in German. This paper was edited by Ferdinand J. Lindheimer, a scholar who enjoyed international fame as a botanist. "For twenty years he was editor and publisher of this paper, and only the infirmities of age compelled him to lay aside his duties. The *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung* was nominally Democratic, but was really intended and actually conducted impartially in the interests of the whole people and the editor was ever fearless in guarding them against private interest and political graft."²

f. *San Antonio Herald*. The State Library has had for some years an incomplete file of the *San Antonio Daily Herald*. It covered the following dates:

August 4, 1857, to March 31, 1860.

November 27, 1865, to June 30, 1867.

January 1, 1868, to June 30, 1876.

¹Stephen B. Weeks, in *The Literature of American History*, 322.

²*Eighteenth Annual Report of the Missouri Botanical Garden*, 139.

January 1 to June 30, 1878.

January 1 to December 31, 1879.

The period of the Civil War is entirely blank in this file. The State Library has had many inquiries concerning the *Herald* during the war, and many efforts were made to ascertain what became of the missing file. A. C. Gray in his *History of the Texas Press* conveys the impression that the *Herald* was published during the war.¹ An addition to the file of this paper recently made by the State Library shows that Mr. Gray is in error. It comprises the *San Antonio Tri-Weekly Herald* for the period from August 29 to November 11, 1865, and the *Daily Herald* from November 14, 1865, to December 30, 1866. In Volume I, Number 1, of the *Tri-Weekly Herald*, issued August 29, 1865, appears the following editorial paragraph:

In putting forth our *Tri-Weekly* we are entering upon no untried experiment, we having published in this city a Daily issue for several years previous to the war, and in point of fact the first Daily paper² ever published in this State. The demand for news in this city has never been so great as at present. This demand it will be our earnest endeavor to supply. At an early date the electric telegraph will be completed to this city, and from that date a complete revolution will have been effected on the whole subject of news and newspapers. Truly, a new era that will be, when, through the instrumentality of electricity (now that the Atlantic has been spanned by the 'cable') the news from two continents shall be published simultaneously in San Antonio!

The same paper, in its issue of October 28, 1865, noted the completion of the telegraph to San Antonio in the following paragraphs:

It is with no ordinary satisfaction that we announce the completion of telegraphic communication to this city—an event which took place day before yesterday . . . The office of the line is located in the Menger Hotel, and is under the management of our young friend, Mr. Charles Spellman . . . He represents that the line is in full working order to Austin, Houston and Galveston, and through those places to all parts of the United States.

¹*Comprehensive History of Texas*, II, 395, 405.

²The writer of this statement evidently had forgotten that *The Morning Star* was published at Houston from April 8, 1839, until about the middle of 1841 as a daily paper.

We have made arrangements for the reception and publication of all news as it reaches Houston, having a special agent there to forward it over the wires. Should we find our *Tri-Weekly* too slow for the new order of things, we shall resort to a Daily, being determined to give the News full and fresh.

Within a fortnight the daily made its appearance; the first issue, dated November 14, 1865, had the following announcement:

Over seven years ago, the proprietors of the *San Antonio Herald* commenced the publication of a Daily paper, which was continued regularly until near the breaking out of the late war. We now resume that paper . . .

g. *Texas New Yorker*. The commission has also added to the newspaper files of the State Library the *Texas New Yorker* for the period from September, 1870, to August, 1872, and September, 1873, to August, 1874. This is a monthly publication, issued in New York city, by George H. Sweet, and was "devoted to making known to the capitalist, merchant, mechanic, and emigrant the agricultural, horticultural, stock-raising and other latent wealth of Texas."

3. *Manuscripts*.—The additions of manuscript materials during the past two years have been important, and have added much to the State Library's resources in this direction. It will not be possible to enumerate every manuscript or document. The following are the more important:

a. "Notes of Travel made by Geo. H. Sweet, of San Antonio, Texas, on his trip through Mexico," July 6 to September 16, 1866, is an interesting manuscript volume, 4x7 inches in size and numbering 168 pages. It was secured from a bookseller in Brooklyn, New York.

b. Hutchinson's Diary. The valuable manuscript diary of Judge Anderson Hutchinson was obtained from a bookseller in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The diary has been printed in THE QUARTERLY, XIII, 294-313.

c. Burnley Papers. The State Library has had for many years a collection of manuscripts called the Burnley Papers. During the past year an important addition to the collection was made from an altogether unexpected quarter. A. T. Burnley was loan

commissioner of the Republic of Texas.¹ A number of important original letters, relating to his financial mission were bid in by the State Library at an auction sale in New York City.

d. Lost manuscripts recovered. The report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics and History for the year 1891 contains the following statement:

The Spanish documents in the Archives of Bexar, relating to the early settlement of Texas, were, by act of the legislature, August 25, 1856, translated and transferred, originals and translations, to the office of the Secretary of State. These papers, consisting of two thousand pages legal cap, appear by Commissioner Spaight's report in 1882, to have been lost for a while, then found and recovered by himself from the legal representative of the Alexander estate in Austin and restored to their proper place of deposit in this department as fixed by law. Some time between 1882 and 1886 these renowned documents, which had engrossed so large a share of the public attention, to say nothing of their cost to the treasury, again disappeared from their place of custody without notice.

The translations referred to above were discovered by the State Librarian among the Spanish Archives of the General Land Office, and after satisfactory proof was made they were turned over to the State Library by Commissioner Robison. A hasty and incomplete examination of the Nacogdoches Archives in the State Library shows that a large per cent of the originals from which the translations were made are preserved in that collection. This discovery furnishes an explanation to what has been a puzzling question, namely, why so many documents that one would expect to find in the Bexar Archives are actually among the Nacogdoches Archives.

e. Reagan Papers. On February 18th last, the John H. Reagan Papers were added to the State Library. An appropriation for their purchase was made by the thirty-first legislature. While there has not been made any extensive examination of these Papers, one is led to expect much material of value relating to the history and public men of Texas since 1847, the approximate date of Judge Reagan's entry into public life.

f. The Lamar Papers. The most important addition to the

¹A biographical sketch of A. T. Burnley was printed in *THE QUARTERLY*, XIV, 150-154.

historical archives of the State Library, however, was the collection of manuscripts made by President Mirabeau B. Lamar. Their purchase also was provided for by an act of the thirty-first legislature. Lamar had planned to write a history of Texas, and also a history of the Austin family; the collection was made with these ends in view. Notices of the Lamar Papers have appeared in *THE QUARTERLY*, IV, 58 and XIII, 81.

4. *Phonographic Record*.—Governor Colquitt presented to the State Library the phonographic record of Governor Hogg's address to the Democratic Legislative Banquet at Dallas, November 6, 1905. This is popularly known as Governor Hogg's last speech. He was ill when he composed it, and not being allowed to attend the banquet made use of the phonograph to convey his message.

IV. PRINTING THE TEXAS ARCHIVES

The collecting of the materials upon which must be based the written history of this State is, of course, preliminary to all other efforts. But sufficient progress has been made in this preliminary work, as regards certain portions of our history, to warrant making a beginning in the publication of the historical records of Texas.

Together with its First Biennial Report, the Texas Library and Historical Commission submitted a copy of the Secret Journals of the Senate of the first eight congresses of the Republic of Texas, and this is now in press. Plans are under way to follow up this initial volume with others as rapidly as the materials can be prepared and the funds that may be available will permit.

It is believed that such publication will give increased impetus to the study of Texas and Southwestern history as it will augment the opportunities of students. Certainly it will put the sources of our history in more enduring form and place them beyond the chance of total loss that is always present so long as they are preserved in manuscripts of which there is but one copy.